

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5053

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 5168

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, MOPS, PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: LAO PROTOCOL NEGOTIATIONS: SUPERVISION OF WITHDRAWAL
FROM LAOS OF FOREIGN FORCES AND MILITARY ADVISERS

SUMMARY. LPF AND RLG HOLD DIFFERENT VIEWS ON WAYS OF CONTROLLING
AND SUPERVISING WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES AND MILITARY AD-
VISERS FROM LAOS. RLG HAS REQUESTED OUR VIEWS ON THIS SUBJECT.
WOULD APPRECIATE REPLY BY COB JULY 26 VIENTIANE TIME SO THAT OUR
VIEW CAN BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY RLG SENIOR NEGOTIATOR BEFORE PRO-
TOCOL IS FINALIZED. END SUMMARY.

1. I CALLED ON SENIOR RLG NEGOTIATOR PHENG PHONGSAVAN EVENING
JULY 24 AND ON SENIOR LPF NEGOTIATOR PHOUMI VONGVICHIT MORNING
JULY 25. FROM THESE TWO CONVERSATIONS I LERANED THAT TWO LAO SIDES
HOLD CONFLICTING VIEWS ON CONTROL AND SUPERVISION OF WITHDRAWAL FROM
LAOS OF FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES AND ADVISERS.

2. LPF POSITION IS THAT JOINT LAO MOBILE MILITARY TEAMS, DISPATCHED
BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT OF TWO PARTIES IN JOINT COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT
THE CEASEFIRE (JCIA) SHOULD OBSERVE ABSENCE OF FOREIGN FORCES BY
INSPECTIONS 60 DAYS AFTER SIGNING OF IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL. DIS-
AGREEMENTS IN JOINT LAO MILITARY COMMISSION WOULD BE REFERRED TO
PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA AND PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG FOR DECI-
SION. ICC WOULD ASSIST ONLY AT REQUEST OF JCIA, AND COLD NOT
ACT WITHOUT SUCH REQUEST. IN SHORT, THERE WOULD BE NO CHECKING OUT
OF FOREIGN FORCES AND ADVISERS AS THEY DEPART FROM LAOS. RATHER,
THEIR ABSENCE FROM LAOS WOULD LATER BE ASCERTAINED BY VISITS OF THE
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JOINT LAO MOBILE MILITARY TEAMS.

3. RLG POSITION CALLS FOR JOINT LAO MILITARY COMMISSION TO 1FOR-
MULATE PLANS FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN MILITARY TROOPS." WITH-
DRAWAL WOULD BE "IN THREE STEPS IN TWENTY DAY INTERVALS AND WITHIN
SIXTY DAYS AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PGNU". (ARTICLE 15B) AS
IN THE LPF PROPOSAL, JOINT LAO MILITARY COMMISSION WOULD ALSO FUNC-
TION ON BASIS OF UNANIMITY. HOWEVER, IF TWO SIDES IN JOINT LAO COM-
MISSION DISAGREE, PHENG SAID, HE WOULD LIKE TO OBTAIN LPF APPROVAL
FOR PRIME MINISTER ALONE (WITHOUT SOUPHANOUVONG) TO MAKE DECISION.
RLG CONCEPT ALSO CALLS ON THE ICC TO "CONTROL AND SUPERVISE THE
WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN MILITARY PERSONNEL FROM LAOS. THE ICC SU-
PERVISORY UNIT SHALL GO TO THE WITHDRAWAL SITES AGREED UPON BY BOTH
LAO PARTIES AT THE TIME INDICATED BY THE JOINT LAO MILITARY COM-
MISSION." (ARTICLE 23B)

4. PHENG ASKED ME WHETHER USG HAD ANY PREFERENCES SO THAT HE COULD
TAKE THEM INTO ACCOUNT IN HIS NEGOTIATIONS WITH PHOUMI. HE SAID HE
COULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT OUR VIEWS WOULD BE INCORPORATED IN THE
FINAL DOCUMENT BUT AT LEAST HE WOULD KNOW WHAT THEY ARE.

5. I REPLIED THAT I DID NOT BELIEVE IT WAS REALISTIC TO ASSUME THAT
NORTH VIETNAMESE WOULD AGREE TO HAVING THEIR FORCES CHECKED OUT
EITHER BY JOINT LAO COMMISSION OR BY ICC. THIS, IN EFFECT, WOULD
PUT FRIENDS OF RLG AT A DISADVANTAGE BECAUSE THEY WOULD BE THE ONLY
ONES WHO MIGHT HAVE TO ABIDE BY THIS PROVISION. I THEREFORE THOUGHT
THAT FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES AND ADVISERS SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN FROM
LAOS THE SAME WAY THEY ENTERED, I.E. WITHOUT ANY CONTROL OR SUPER-
VISION. HENCE LPF CONCEPT OF ESTABLISHING BY ON THE SPOT INSPECTIONS
OF JOINT LAO COMMISSION ABSENCE FROM LAOS OF FOREIGN MILITARY FORCES
APPEARS TO BE MORE REALISTIC APPROACH THAN RLG'S PRESENT THINKING
ON THIS SUBJECT. I ADDED THAT WHAT REALLY MATTERS IS ABILITY OF
MOBIL TEAMS TO MOVE AROUND COUNTRY FREELY SO THAT THEY CAN ASCER-
TAIN WHETHER OR NOT FROEIGN FORCES HAVE IN FACT DEPARTED. THIS MEANS
THAT RLG SHOULD STICK TO ITS POSITION THAT IN THE EVENT OF A DEAD-
LOCK IN THE JOINT LAO COMMISSION, PRIME MINISTER ALONE WILL DECIDE
WHETHER AND WHEN TO SEND THE JOINT COMMISSION ON INSPECTION MISSIONS.

6. PHENG TOOK NOTE OF MY VIEWS AND ASKED THAT I QUERY WASHINGTON
TO ASSURE THATMY PERSONAL VIEWS REFLECT OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POSI-
TION. SINCE IT APPEARS THAT NEGOTIATIONS ARE DRAWING TO A CLOSE
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WITHIN NEXT TEN DAYS, WASHINGTON'S REPLY NEEDED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
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